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ABSTRACT

Research has indicated that gender constancy and categorization are achieved in childhood and that autonomous sex-role integration occurs during adulthood, well after a secure sense of gender identity is established. To examine developmental sex-role identification, college students rated themselves on a "current" Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and then completed an "early" BSRI while remembering their earliest career goal. A statistically significant difference occurred between "early" and "current" scores. Inventory score means for males shifted from androgynous on the "early" BSRI to masculine on the "current" BSRI. For females, scores indicated a shift from a feminine to a more androgynous sex role. The findings suggest that females may begin life more stereotypically female and develop androgynously, while males tend to become more masculine in their sex role functioning over time. Females may also use stereotypes more prominently to reconstruct their past.
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Gender : Specific Sex Role Development

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Gender Specific Sex Role Development

Often sex role has been viewed as a bipolar continuum at which a person falls near one end or the other. If an individual endorsed an item indicating masculine interests, there was a simultaneous nonendorsement of feminine interests. Being feminine automatically meant being opposite of masculine (Constantinople, 1973).

Some theorists state that the healthy personality can and should include both masculine and feminine characteristics. Various feminine and masculine traits were thought to be integrated during development into adulthood, i.e., animus and anima (Jung, 1951); communion and agency (Bakan, 1966); or Loewinger's theory which describes the autonomous level of ego development as integrating opposing tendencies of masculine and feminine characteristics (Block, 1973).

Several studies have found that those individuals who possess high degrees of both masculine and feminine characteristics possess more self-esteem than do more traditionally sex-typed individuals (Spence et. al., 1975). It has been demonstrated that persons who view themselves as traditionally masculine or feminine tend to avoid cross-sex behavior or report subjective discomfort when performing such behavior (Fem and Lenney, 1976; Maffeo, 1978).

A self-concept which allows individuals to freely engage in both masculine and feminine behaviors is called androgynous (Fem, 1974). Sandra Fem (1975) argues that androgynous people are basically more adaptive to their environment since they combine the best of both

feminine and masculine characteristics and can respond to a variety of situations with the appropriate behavior. She has provided an inventory scale, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), which yields independent masculinity, femininity and psychological androgyny scores. This instrument measures the degree to which an individual has integrated characteristics of both traditional masculinity and femininity into his/her own sex-role conception of self. Sex-role categorization to an individual's position was also related on Leary's Interpersonal Behavioral Circle where androgynous individuals fell into the friendly dominant quadrant (Berzins, 1975).

It has been hypothesized that a person achieves gender constancy and categorization as a child. At this time sex role conception appears as more stereotyped and exaggerated than self concepts held by adults (Kohlberg, 1966). Autonomous sex role integration is viewed as developmentally occurring during adulthood well after a secure sense of gender identity is established (Erikson, 1964). This study was undertaken to examine the developmental sex-role identification. The area of investigation included two measures of the BSRI. After completing the BSRI (current BSRI) the research participants were asked to recall their earliest career goal and then to complete the BSRI a second time while remembering this goal (early BSRI). It was hypothesized that the early BSRI scores would be less androgynous than the current BSRI since maturation appeared to be a factor in being androgynous.

Method

Design: This was a quasi-experimental within-subjects design in-

volving a retrospective study. The early and current BSRI scores were the dependent variables and sex (male vs. female) was the independent variable.

Subjects: Subjects were students enrolled in a large introductory Psychology class. Thirty-seven females and thirty-eight males participated. The average age of females was 24 with a range of 18-52 and the average age of males was 23.4 with a range of 18-37.

Materials: The BSRI consists of 60 adjectives to which individuals respond in terms of how descriptive each characteristic is of themselves; the individual responds on a scale from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). The adjectives consist of 20 "masculine" personality characteristics (e.g., ambitious, independent) and 20 "feminine" characteristics (e.g., gentle, affectionate). Those characteristics were chosen because they were significantly and consistently rated by both men and women as more desirable for one sex than the other. The instrument also contains 20 neutral adjectives which can be scored on a social desirability scale, but which mainly serve as filler items (Bem, 1974).

An individual's scores on the masculine and feminine scales are the average of the self-ratings for the 20 adjectives that comprise each scale. The masculine (M) and feminine (F) scores can each range from 1 to 7. Two types of scores can then be computed to determine the degree of sex-role stereotyping in the individual's self-concept: (a) a difference score (F-M) or (b) a Student's *t* ratio for the difference. The *t* ratio was used in the present study. Subjects whose *t* scores ranged from - 1.00

to +1.00 were classified as androgynous, those less than - 1.00 as masculine, and those greater than + 1.00 as feminine (Yanico, 1978). The t ratio for each score was obtained by multiplying the Androgyny difference score by 2.322 - a conversion factor derived from normative sample data by Sandra L. Bem, (1974).

Procedure: Two BSRI tests were passed out to the students. The top of the test had standard instructions and a sample scale of 1-7 for clarity. The bottom of the test asked for age, sex, marital status, earliest recalled career goal and at what age the earliest recall occurred. After filling out the BSRI (current BSRI) the students were asked to fill out the BSRI again while remembering how they would have rated themselves on the adjective at an earlier age - the age of early career goal recall. This was used as a point of reference for that time period in their lives. The standard instructions were read and time was allowed for questions. The students were informed that they could stop participating in the experiment at any time and that full confidentiality would be secured. Total time for both tests was 20-30 minutes.

Results: A summary of standard deviations for males and females on the current BSRI vs. early BSRI indicated a shift in the means of the early BSRI scores to current BSRI scores from a more positive (F) trend to a more negative (M) trend for both males and females as noted in Table I.

Insert Table I about here

The single factor repeated measures ANOVA was further used to compare the scores. The calculated ANOVA for early ESRI vs. current ESRI was $F(1, 36) = 7.780$, $p < .01$ for females and $F(1, 37) = 17.42$, $p < .01$ for males as seen in Table II. The average age of early ESRI recall

Insert Table II about here

for females was 7.24 and for males was 7.76.

Discussion: The findings of this research do support the hypothesis that the early ESRI scores would be less androgynous than current ESRI but only in the female population. For males the scores were more androgynous on the early ESRI and more masculine on the current ESRI. Females scored more feminine on the early ESRI becoming more androgynous on the current ESRI. In general the scores changed from positive to more negative scores, a more masculine tendency. This may be an indication of a greater acceptance of non-traditional sex-role expectations for women (Zucherman, 1979). Since studies of stereotyping generally find that many more of the characteristics that our society values are associated with men than with women, it is likely for men to have shifted toward more masculine traits (Proverman et. al., 1970). Stereotyping of the female role as passive, having less occupations available to her, depicting her as having less ability might account for early ESRI scores being more feminine and current ones more androgynous as she becomes aware that she is capable of more occupations (L.Z. Mc Arthur and Resko 1977; Oliver, 1974; Flerx & Rogers, 1975).

Archival research shows dramatic differences in portrayals of boys and girls. Males are described as doing more things, taking action in emergencies and making decisions (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972). The greater available behaviors that the male has to choose from might be the reason for the early more androgynous scores for males since the androgynous person is less afraid to respond to a greater variety of situations with the appropriate behavior (Bem, 1975). The male child has more opportunity to respond in a variety of situations with more accessible behavior modeling.

The results may also indicate a gender specific effect in sex role development in which females begin life more stereotypically female and develop androgynously while males tend to become more masculine in their sex role functioning over time. It is also possible that males are exposed to a greater variety of career models earlier in life than females and tend to focus on male roles later in life while the converse may be true for females. Females may use stereotypes more prominently to reconstruct their past than males. Also, since the overall shift for both males and females was from a more feminine to a more masculine score, it is possible that the data indicate a developmental process in which college students become more masculine in their sex role functioning. Another reason for the shift can be due to the reflective nature of the data i.e. what the subjects were remembering or their present memory state might have influenced their responses. Further research of a prospective nature will help clarify this point.

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Table I

Standard Deviation for BSRI

Males N=38

Current BSRI

$\sigma = 2.077$

$\bar{X} = -1.482$

$\Sigma = -56.327$

Early BSRI

$\sigma = 2.214$

$\bar{X} = .577$

$\Sigma = 21.925$

Shift in means from early BSRI
to current BSRI

For Males

For Females



Females N=37

Current BSRI

$\sigma = 1.934$

$\bar{X} = .301$

$\Sigma = 11.138$

Early BSRI

$\sigma = 2.573$

$\bar{X} = 1.093$

$\Sigma = 40.458$

Table II

SINGLE FACTORS REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA

<u>Early BSRI</u>	<u>Current BSRI</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Females	Females	Females	
$\bar{X} = 1.093$	$\bar{X} = .301$	7.78	$< .01$
Males	Males	Males	
$\bar{X} = .577$	$\bar{X} = 1.482$	17.40	$< .01$